

Appropriations Committee Testimony
February 20, 2013

Good evening Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Stella Somers and this is my husband Michael Somers – who is a Member of the Board of the Western Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau – together, we own an award winning country inn called Rock Hall Luxe Lodging located in Colebrook Connecticut. I have found the public relations and marketing efforts of the Western Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau invaluable. Because of their PR efforts our property has been introduced to media outlets both nationally and internationally and subsequently featured in many newspapers and magazines and in a wide variety of social media outlets nationwide including New York 1 television.

One of the most important strengths of regional tourism districts is the network of diverse partnerships they create. These partnerships link a wide variety of businesses and attractions that are packaged and marketed to the visiting public as well as to our state residents by the Western Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau. The Unwind brochure is a perfect example of this partnership as it is composed of over 500 dues paying members and attractions that all contribute to publish this award -winning publication. The production of the Unwind brochure illustrates that the public and private sectors located in Western Connecticut recognize the importance of regional tourism promotion – we support it financially and we want it to continue and most importantly we depend on it to help market our businesses, area attractions and the region.

I am here to thank you for supporting the Regional Tourism District system for over 30 years and to ask for your continued support. Please restore the tourism district enabling legislation, HB6354 and restoring funding to the three tourism regions HB 6350.

Tourism is a key economic engine in Connecticut benefiting both residents and state coffers. The fact is tourism is one of the very few areas of the Connecticut budget that generates net revenue for the State. Marketing dollars allocated to generate this revenue are an investment; an investment in Connecticut's economy and jobs!

Regional Tourism is essential to Connecticut's future. It is an integral part of our economy and our everyday life touching every person in the state in some way. Tourism and the revenue and jobs created because of it can, and will, help get Connecticut out of its budget deficit problems in the short term and help insure positive economic health in the future.

On behalf of Western Connecticut Convention and Visitors Bureau and all the businesses and attractions in the region I urge you to restore the funding for regional tourism because funding for local tourism is an investment that returns roughly seven dollars (\$7) for every one dollar (\$1) invested.

Thank you for your time and attention.
Stella Somers